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ABSTRACT

Foreign-language methodology courses do not generally provide potential teachers with sufficient criteria for judging either the most reasonable format or the probable cost/labor effectiveness of media materials which could be used to advantage in their classes. Opportunities for practical application of the student's knowledge, particularly where linguistics is concerned, are severely limited in traditional courses by the overwhelming amount of theory deemed necessary. This course was designed to integrate the theoretical aspects of linguistics with mediated instruction in several specific ways, providing a system approach to production and evaluation of instruction of instructor-designed materials. The objectives of the course were to enable the student to: 1) isolate and evaluate a problem in applied instruction in terms of its relative importance in the total material to be learned in the language course; 2) consider various media solutions to a problem, and judge them by specific objective criteria; and 3) deal with specific media systems, so that he may better utilize available materials and make specific recommendations as to possible future systems whenever the opportunity arises. This paper outlines the course itself, with special consideration given to an evaluation of the student's reactions. Suggestions for future work in this direction are offered. (Author/KM)

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"A PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION COURSE IN MEDIA-SUPPORTED INSTRUCTION FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS"[1]

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The language teaching methodology course at my institution, and I am sure it is not an isolated instance, provides thorough coverage of language teaching theory, and even devotes a couple of class sessions to the workings of the language laboratory. However, the work done in such areas as Learning Activity Packages (LAP's), stresses the student's ingenuity above all, and provides no direct correlation with an established teaching program. To provide a more direct and systematic approach to the very real problems in media-supported or media-based instruction that confront the language teacher, I designed and taught a course at the senior-graduate level. The students were to be either seniors who had finished their student teaching or in-service teachers. The combination of both media production and program evaluation made this course unique for the students.

To organize the course I took into consideration the estimated background of the students, the facilities and resources available to me within the university, and the general areas of investigation provided by a proposed set of guidelines for superior professional preparation for Foreign Language teaching in the State of Ohio.[2]

The course itself consisted of four tracks--lines of pursuit--which progressed through the term. As schematized on the following page, they are:

1. Language teaching problems we dealt with.
2. The use of various media systems, including the necessary motor skill acquisition.
3. The processes involved in manufacturing and evaluating software.
4. The conceptualization and utilization of a systems approach to teaching, particularly as it applies to media work.

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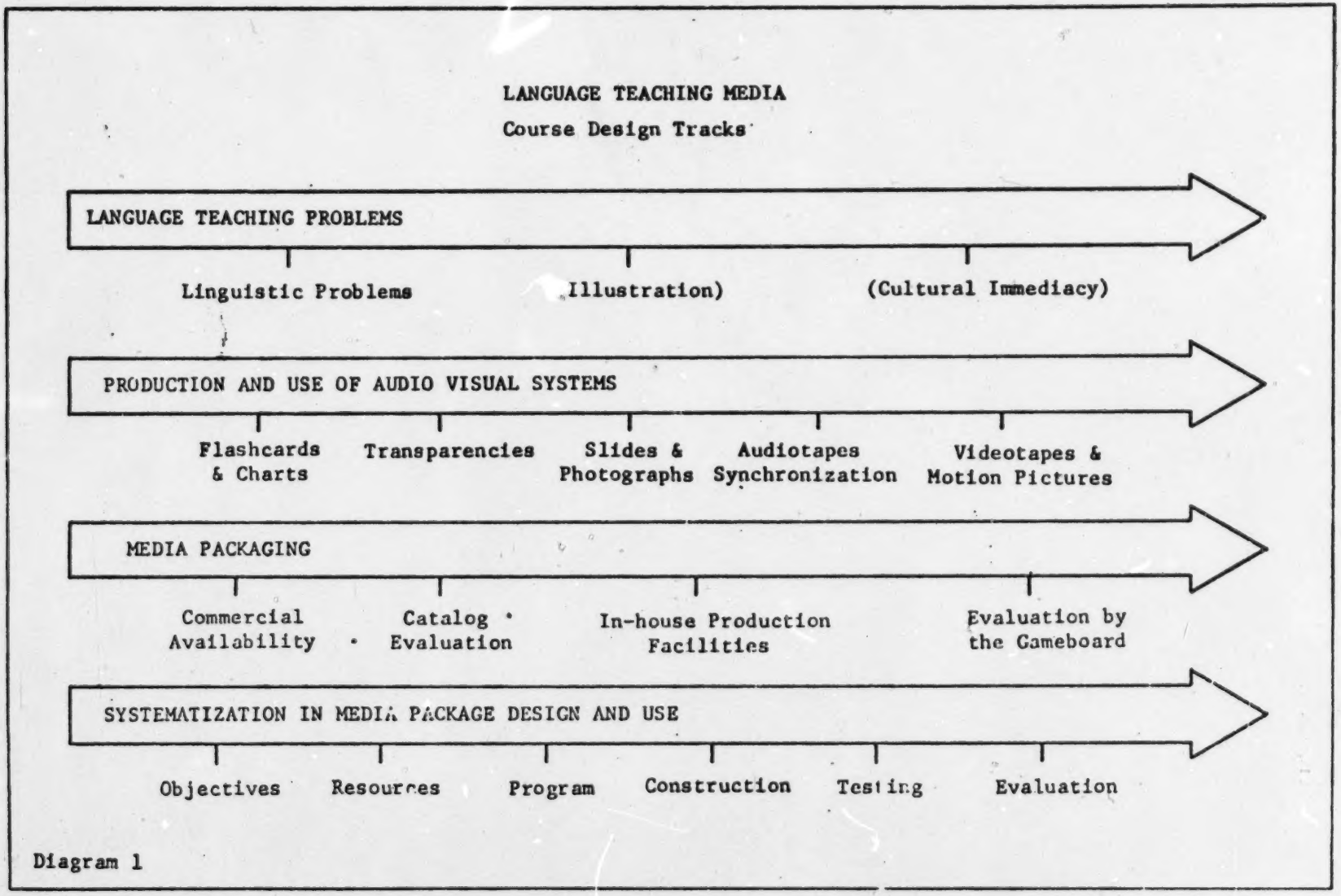

LANGUAGE TEACHING MEDIA
Course Design Tracks
LANGUAGE TEACHING PROBLEMS
Linguistic Problems
Illustration)
(Cultural Immediacy)
PRODUCTION AND USE OF AUDIO VISUAL SYSTEMS
Flashcards & Charts
Transparencies
Slides & Photographs
Audiotapes Synchronization
Videotapes & Motion Pictures
MEDIA PACKAGING
Commercial Availability
Catalog Evaluation
In-house Production Facilities
Evaluation by the Gameboard
SYSTEMATIZATION IN MEDIA PACKAGE DESIGN AND USE
Objectives
Resources
Program
Construction
Testing
Evaluation

Diagram 1

Let me discuss these individually, as they are each separate, yet contribute to the total concept of the course.

I The Language Teaching Problems

At another time this course could have been expanded to include the other, more common, uses of media in Foreign Language teaching. But the course was listed as a special topic in linguistics. So the first topic of discussion was a linguistically-oriented assessment of problems encountered in teaching. In addition, books on the teaching of the various languages and on linguistic structures of each language were on reserve in the library.[3]

The situations we concentrated our efforts on were all felt to be more easily comprehended when something other than a standard text book, with its Foreign Language-English translation method was the vehicle of explanation. For example, situations in the foreign language where the context determines the structure, and an English translation could be identical in both cases, as in Spanish:

Preferimos ir al cine, or
Preferíamos ir al cine

can both translate "We preferred to go to the movies", but the difference in the verb tense can be easily cued by context background, or by a standardized media tag.

Another situation is found in areas where the translation does not imply the form of change in the target language, even though there are differences in the form in both languages:

English:	Good	Better	Best
Spanish	Bueno	Mejor	El Mejor

English:	One house	Five houses
German:	Ein Haus	Fünf Hause

Again, in a third case, a translation is not as effective as a media presentation, here where the change is in the syntax of the target language. This change may be necessary because of several reasons. For example, the placement of pronouns for noun objects, change of placement of indirect objects in affirmative and negative commands, etc.,

French:	Je vois le livre	- Noun
	Je le vois	- Pronoun
Spanish:	Póngaselo	- Affirmative
	No se lo ponga	- Negative

II The second track, necessarily dependent on what was readily available, included the manipulation of flashcards and overhead transparencies, the opaque projector, audiotape in several forms, accessing equipment, slide projection, synchronization facilities, and video systems.

III The Media packaging aspect began with an assessment of facilities available for production of in-house materials, and then proceeded to a comparison of what was most easily obtainable through commercial distributors. The third step was evaluation in terms of program, feasibility and cost/labor analysis.

IV The work done on the concept and evolution of a systems approach was without a doubt the most alien aspect of the course. What they had considered as primarily common sense was found to be theoretically constructable according to variables which they found they could specify and alter. I chose a small paperback to focus these discussions.[4]

We began with the idea that teaching itself is a specific case of a communication system, as shown on the accompanying Diagram 2(a).[5] We discussed at some length the problems the students encountered as teachers, and where the areas of possible change within their control lay.

We then moved to the ramifications of the system within the sphere of foreign language teaching, breaking each piece of the system down into the appropriate components. In addition, and because of time limitations and experiment limitations of the class, we confined our work to a specific area of the system. This is shown in Diagram 2(b).

As is shown in the diagram, we did not deal with the area involved with feedback, except in the work done in the class itself. That is, the work done was not field-tested at this time. The results will be tested in a follow-up study, planned for use with in-service teachers. It would be an excellent situation if the class could be experienced as part of a demonstration school where results would be observed immediately.

A typical class could have the following format:

1. Film on the Resource Development Facilities of a large university or regional secondary media distribution system.

2. Discussions of film, relating the film to what they know about the Cleveland State University System, and asking questions on techniques or facilities they don't understand.

3. Review of linguistic problem, e.g., design of slot substitution techniques, with each person trying out a possible design on the class, and then discussing the construction techniques they have already mastered and how they affect the exercise.

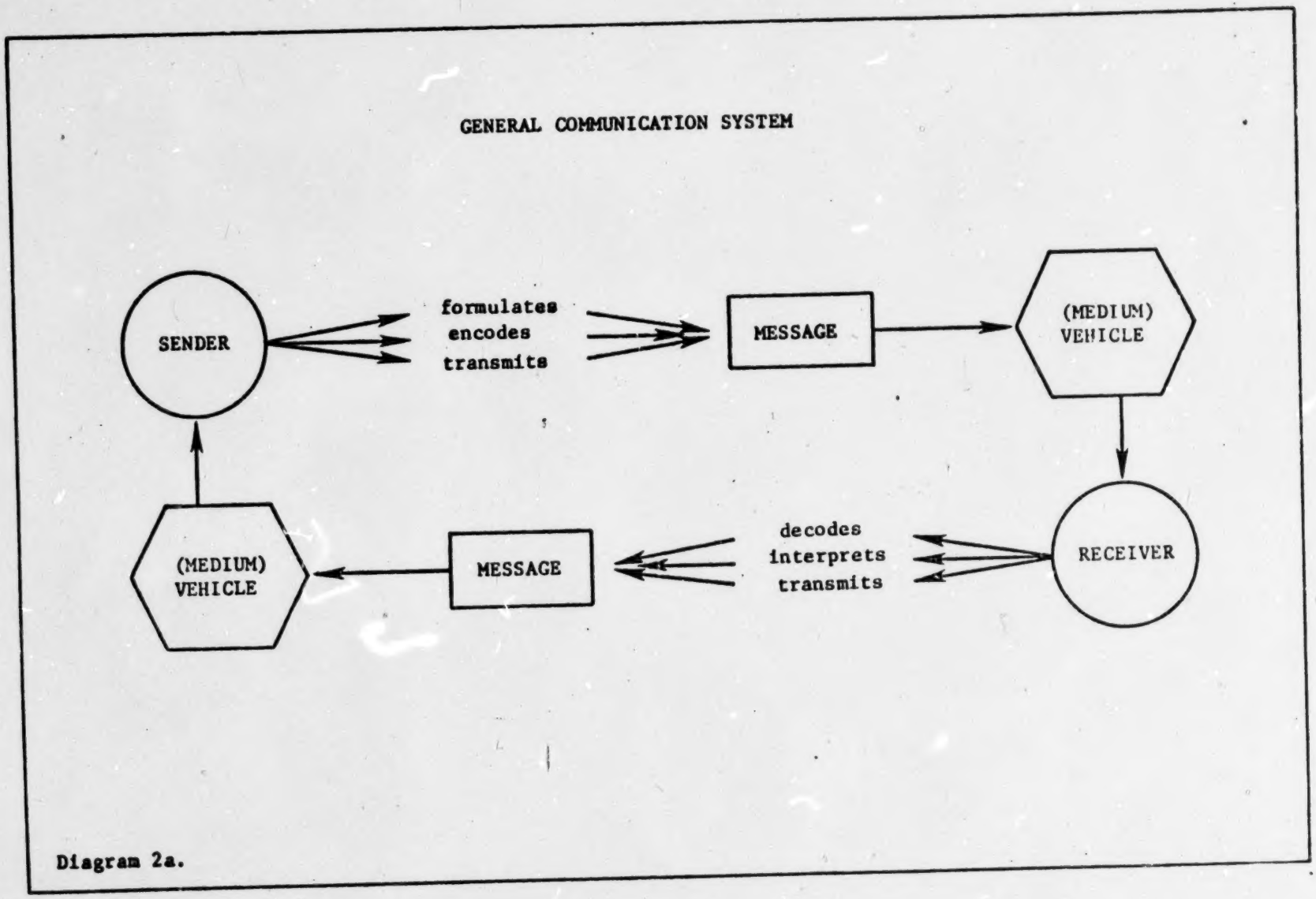

GENERAL COMMUNICATION SYSTEM
SENDER
formulates
encodes
transmits
MESSAGE
(MEDIUM)
VEHICLE
RECEIVER
decodes
interprets
transmits
MESSAGE
(MEDIUM)
VEHICLE

Diagram 2a.

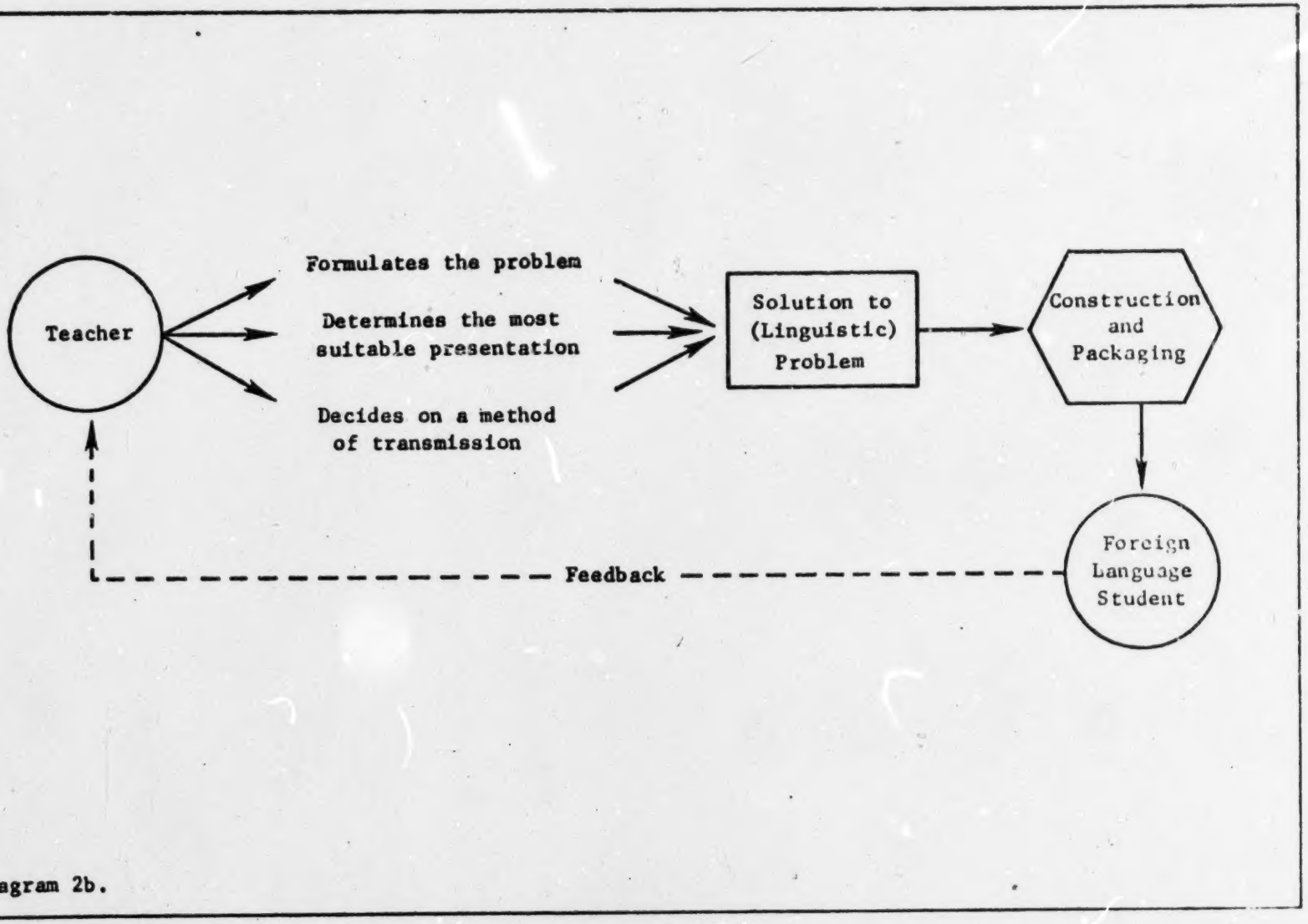

Teacher
Formulates the problem
Determines the most suitable presentation
Decides on a method of transmission
Solution to (Linguistic) Problem
Construction and Packaging
Foreign Language Student
Feedback

Diagram 2b.

4. Workshop session on overlaying colors for use in overhead transparencies, cost and labor evaluation in comparison to efficiency in presenting an exercise.

This is a very well-balanced class. Most were a little lopsided in one aspect or another. This was expecially true when the class started workshops in such things as videotape techniques, which required large blocks of time to discuss scripting, camera work and editing.

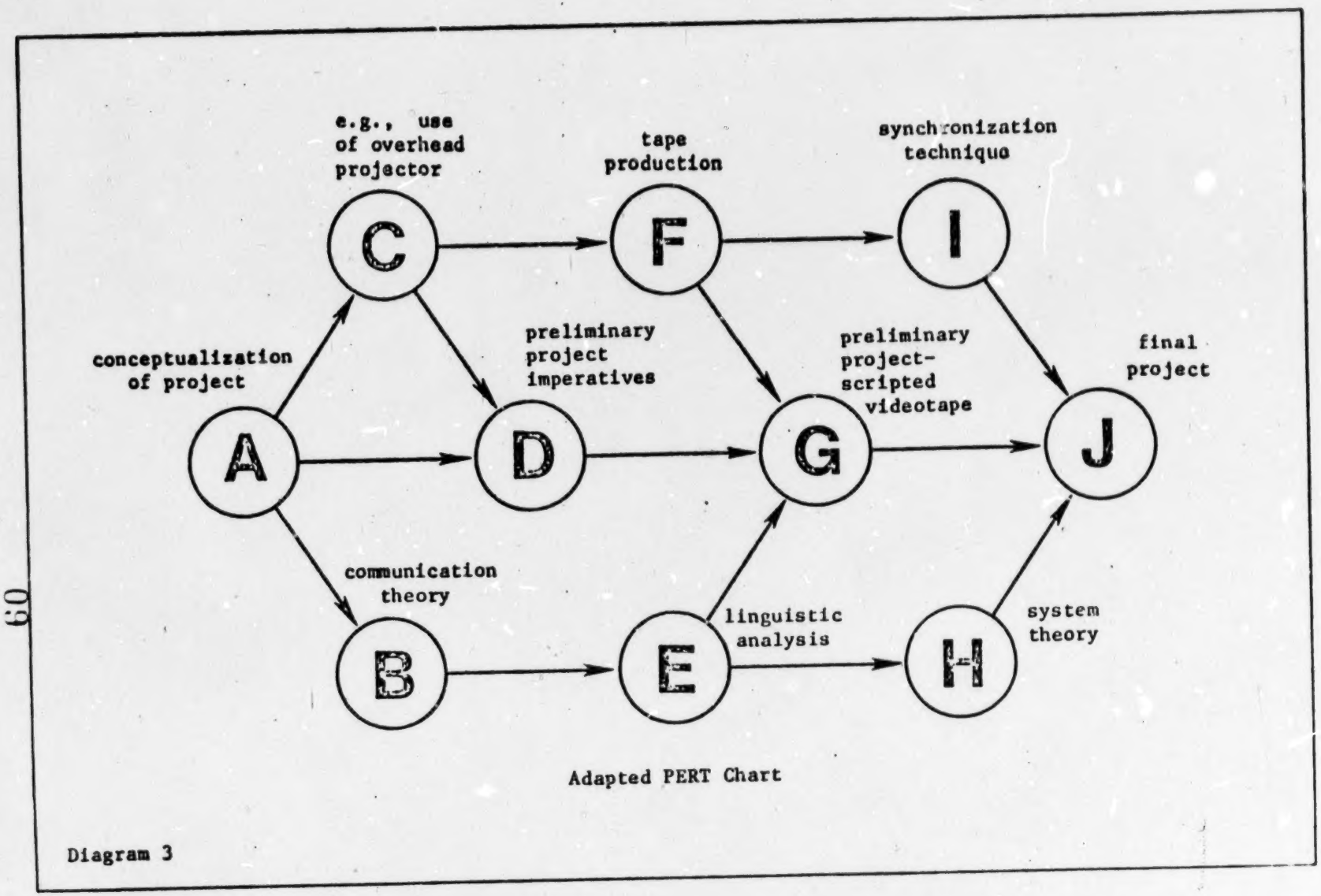
Using the resources of the Instructional Media Services division of Cleveland State University, we drew up a chart of various production costs. This would vary with each institution, and it is necessary for the students to understand the basis of the cost in each case, whether it is available equipment, manpower or external factors (film development, tape cost, etc.). We were then able to map out the probable effectiveness of various solutions to media problems and choose the direction in which to begin work. In each case, whether learning discrimination between the formal or familiar in verb usage, or rules for forming the subjunctive of irregular verbs, we charted an area of production for the kind of learning versus the tool used. This gave us the means to greatest probable efficiency.

Thus, as motion is not necessary to learn verb conjugations, expensive video or motion picture staging can be avoided. On the other hand, to show discrimination with prepositions required with motion, this is a reasonable expense and should be expected. But this process pinpoints areas of investigation and the student can concentrate on probable fruitful areas of production.[6]

The next step is to discuss the work on the details necessary to produce good materials. There are many logical guides for the systematic construction of a media package.[7] Any which the students can work with will be a good flow chart.

This kind of integrated track approach resulted, for the purposes of the class, in a kind of perceptual PERT chart. PERT (Program Evaluation and Review Technique), was developed in 1958 and 1959 to measure and control the development and progress of the Polaris Fleet Ballistic Missile Program.[8] The "critical path" A-D-G-J is the progress of related efforts necessary to produce work for the course. It also gives an indication of how units could be interchanged and what results would be. It makes clear that until the students understand what a script is good for, they would not see the value in scripting out thoroughly a piece of work. On the other hand, until they know how several modular units work, any script will be impractical and nebulous.

The works I have charted down the critical path were the principal projects with the aspect mandatory on my part noted. The other aspect, whether problem or means of solution, was left to the student's choice.



Adapted PERT Chart

Diagram 3

SPECIFIC PROBLEMS DEALT WITH THROUGHOUT THE COURSE

1. The Difference Between Homemade or Bought. To begin with, the students thought of teacher-produced materials as definitely inferior, or "quick and dirty". As the course progressed they were able to see these materials as "custom designed", though sometimes the time and labor necessary to do this were not worth it. This prejudice of the students was partially offset by the proficiency gained through an awareness of the possibilities of the systms approach, which made more specific the steps necessary to produce a usable piece of material, and encouraged revision the second time around, producing a more responsible attitude on the part of the teacher. In addition, students became much more critical of materials offered for sale commercially. Where before they regarded the whole catalog of a media package distributor as a "wish book", by the time they were through, they could say if something was likely to be worth the money spent, and analyze how it would enhance their personal instruction program. They also had a good idea of the most common formats of materials offered commercially and, therefore were in a much better position to analyze their effectiveness in the systems where they were teaching. This is a worthwhile skill to have developed in any case. A teacher might very well decide, for example, that a series of slides on leisure life in France would be easier to buy, even if he wanted to elaborate on the basic series with a soundtrack of his own. This implies that slides would be easier to work with than filmstrips, when versatility is a desirable characteristic of the package. On the other hand, a series of slides that would illustrate a short story or essay might be easier to produce for a specific class than to locate one that would match exactly the level of language acquisition of his class, or the specific problem the teacher is trying to solve by the use of the slides--illustration of plot, or specific chains of action, or verb tense clarification, etc.

2. Specific Media Systems Dealt With. This can be approached from at least two ways. The students could be introduced to the "world of media" and acquire a degree of efficiency in the operation of all of them gradually. However, I preferred to work modularly, trying to "master" one setup at a time, going from flashcards and transparencies to videotape and movies. The advantage of this latter approach is that all the knowledge acquired for one piece of equipment carries over to the next, and the students can discuss among themselves the technical problems involved for each project because they are all working in the same area. The disadvantage is that it might restrict the more knowledgeable, or imply a gradation in prestige that comes with the order of difficulty of operation of the equipment itself. This was offset by a constant re-evaluation of cost/labor effectiveness.

3. The Linguistic Orientation. While I feel that the direction I chose is completely legitimate, the students would have enjoyed constructing an LAP for another area--illustration or cultural immediacy,

for example. The use they would make of these LAP's would more than make up for the time taken awy from the linguistic orientation, and so long as it is not the primary area of concentration of the course, could even be beneficial for the morale of the students.

4. Outside Sources of Instruction. As the students became aware of their own capabilities, they expressed a greater desire for not only hands-on experience, but communication with professionals in the field of instructional (or commercial) development. The university photographer was invited for a guest lecture and discussion, which the students obviously enjoyed. But I feel that in the future courses, a talk from experts even outside the university could be beneficial to their work.

RESULTS OF THE COURSE

1. Hand in hand with the teacher-made/bought process of evaluation came a growing awareness of what is worth doing in the course of teaching. While this was linked to some very specific assignments in applied linguistics, the general procedure carried over to other areas, culture and literature, as they became more aware of where the contrasts were most evident in cultural conflict, for example.

2. Aside from written work, some very usable LAP's, which are on file in our Media Lab, for individual work or class work with an instructor, depending on the problem.

3. As I mentioned, the course objectives were formulated with the state proposed secondary teaching professional preparation guidelines in mind. As was expected, the students felt very confident about their ability in this regard. What pleased me were sentiments such as the following--"I feel much more capable to try various approaches using different media..." "I only wish I had this course before my last quarter...The resources here are fantastic. It puzzles me that more teachers here don't develop their own materials for use in their classes."

4. The students came away from this course with a healthy awareness of their own power. They do not just interpret the book. They can teach the course, using their own knowledge, and whatever materials--book, slide-tape program movies, etc.--are appropriate. This may run contrary to the idea that the good teacher needs only follow the well-written book, but I think that is somebody else's students. Ours are too aware, and require that the teacher be equally aware, able to use the resources at his or her command.

5. Following from this, the students developed a sense of the system of communication that is present in the classroom, and the variables affecting it, from the physical constants in the room (and even the room itself or lack of walls) to the way in which material is presented and the possibilities for reaction that are inherent in the presentation of material to be learned.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Funding for the original course was provided by the Center for Effective Learning, Cleveland State University.

2. Guidelines for Teacher Preparation in Foreign Languages, Teacher Certification Committee of OMLTA, under consideration (Unpublished).

3. Each student was encouraged to pursue the linguistic lines which he/she felt were relevant to his own teaching and language area. We all used material from Belasco's excellent introduction to Applied Linguistics, and then added to this from a number of books and articles on reserve. Some of these were the following:

   Belasco, Simon, Introductory Section to Applied Linguistics, Spanish, By Daniel Cardenas, Simon Belasco, General Editor.

   Cherry, Colin. On Human Communication. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1957.

   Chomsky, Noam. Syntactic Structures. The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1957.

   Desberg, Dan, "Structural Linguistics and High School Language Teaching Classical Outlook, Vol. 37, No. 2 (1959), 13-14.

   Lado, Robert. Linguistics Across Cultures. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1957.

4. James J. Thompson, Instructional Communication, D. Van Norstrand Company, New York, c. 1969. A book for "students of teaching who wish to influence student learning more profoundly through the many media available to educators today" (p.v.). It deals with all media through the framework of teaching as a communication skill.

5. An adaptation of Thompson, p.14.

6. See also Ralph K. Lonigro, Jr. and John Eschenbrenner, Jr., "A model for selecting Media in Technical Vocational Education" in Audiovisual Instruction, November, 1973, PP. 27-31

7. See for example, Dagmar E. Brodt, "Task Analysis for the Development of Audiovisual Programmed Instruction Modules", Audiovisual Education, Nov. 1973, PP. 8-9.

8. Anderson, et al., Encyclopedia of Educational Evaluation, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 1973, pp. 291, 292.

9. For another discussion of this topic see "Home-Made or Store-Bought-Two Approaches to work in the Laboratory" by Geoffrey Pill, NALLD, 4, Summer, 1974, pp. 18-21.